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ABSTRACT

High level thinking abilities extend beyond just command of facts and concepts. More crucial is idea use and refinement through discourse encounters. Thinking in classrooms is served by dialogic teachers who understand and use the right discourse tactics and designs. Effective discourse will usually be accompanied by: (1) extended idea exchanges; (2) participation of teachers and students sharing opinions; (3) engaged and higher order thinking energies; (4) attitude flexibility; (5) willingness to discuss uncertainties; (6) willingness by all, or most, to share knowledge and opinions; and (7) participants becoming more competent and confident about their communication abilities. Tactics are teacher controlled with students in the mode of prompted responders. Designs are an array of extended and consequential activities and assignments embedded into content units and intended to generate sincere, autonomous, and spontaneous discourse episodes. Documentation and pragmatic recommendations for tactics and especially designs are comprehensive. A group evaluation form is appended. (Author)

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DYNAMIC DISCOURSE:

TACTICS, DESIGNS, AND TEACHER ATTITUDES

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DYNAMIC DISCOURSE:
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For years, I've felt the frustration of trying to teach and practice principles of effective classroom discourse. Outcomes compared to ideal principles were often starkly contrasting. Efforts to prime honest dialogue often seemed fated to a few minutes of obligatory student response against a backdrop of laborious teacher puppeteering.

At other times, the illusion of good discourse episodes lulled me into a euphoric state. But the real truth of what had probably occurred is well expressed(Sykes, 1989).

> "For example, class discussion of a case often involves nothing more elevated than the swapping of opinions, leading to the tacit conclusion that one student's view is as good as another's ... These discussions are delightfully open-ended, often lively, often engaging. However, what is being learned, or indeed whether any learning takes place is open to question." 1

Descriptions of effective discourse abound and are impressive.

> "Discussion involves longer exchanges, exchanges among students as well as between teacher and students, and questions soliciting student opinions and thoughts not just right answers." (Stodolsky, Ferguson, and Wimpelberg, 1981). 2

> "...student-student interaction ... calls for complex thinking processes and attitude change." (Gall and Gall, 1976). 3

> "...various activities in which teacher and students 'discuss' what they don't know." (Dillon, 1984). 4

A final quote may be the most intriguing for its quantitative focus on discussion as an event having already occurred if:

> "...the teacher planned to have a discussion, if the students rated it as a discussion, and if students accounted for at least 40 percent of the total talk." (Dillon, 1984). 5

Newmann(1988) provides an impressive description of discourse that emphasizes its ascent beyond duplicating finished knowledge from expert sources. For Newmann, when students begin to find their own voices and produce their own language, discourse is occurring. 6

DISCOURSE TACTICS AND DESIGNS

The traditional recommendations intended to improve discourse in classrooms cluster about the often taken-for-granted belief that various elements of discourse can be set up or prompted by the classroom teacher. These recommended tactics consist of teacher action schemes about what to do vocally(orally), how to project more effectively, how to analyze classroom talk, how to work with room and equipment ... and more. Given any of these tactics-grounded approaches, the message to educators is that effective discourse is driven by classroom teachers with the right qualitative and quantitative command of various techniques.

My view - thesis, if you prefer - is that the ubiquitous focus in past and current literature on discrete tactics is why many of us are frequently frustrated in the quest for good classroom discourse.

An alternative to tactics preoccupation may reside in efforts to design discourse into content coverage. The discourse agents are embedded in extended units where activities like projects, displays, performances, self and group evaluations, and various other student and student group endeavors can evolve over an extended time period. Such designs embedded into the units increase the likelihood of spontaneous, authentic, and consequential classroom discourse.

The emphasis on discourse as part of unit design should not be interpreted as dismissal of various tactics. In fact tactics and designs should be mutually accommodating. A somewhat extensive review of frequently described and recommended discourse tactics is therefore appropriate for its own value and as a detailed preface for description of the (probably) more powerful discourse designs.

Vocal Tactics:

Articles are packed with recommended tactics. they encompass various oral response schemes for teachers to ponder and practice. Sincere but careless readers may finish such literature with the uncomplicated expectation that magical student responses will occur with mastery of appropriate vocal question and response agendas.

Carin and Sund(1971) write of teacher need "To listen and question at just the right place..." 7 An impressive but somehow typical array of oral response tactics for teacher use comes from Dillon(1984):

> 1) Make declarative statements - opinions, convictions, descriptions, etc.
> 2) Make reflective and subjective statements - stating a feeling one has or letting the group in on one's thinking process. (Vocal metacognition has gained a loyal following.)
> 3) Describe a specific state of mind related to another's idea. - "I'm not understanding you." or "I'm concerned about that too." or "I'm not very certain about this idea."
> 4) Invite student elaboration - "I'd like to hear more about that." or "Can someone take that further?"
> 5) Maintain deliberate, appreciative silence until a student or students resume or enter into the discourse. This tactic, wait-time, may be the best known and mos frequently tried of oral tactics. 8

How and when to call on students is referred to as "cool calling."(Welty, 1988).

> "Do you want to ask for volunteers or do you want to call on someone? If you decide on calling, you have yet another choice - giving the student some time to think about the question or requiring an answer immediately, cool calls or cold calls, as the jargon goes." 9

The most ambitious array of organized vocal tactics that I've encountered in recent years appears in Idea Paper No. 15(Cashin and Mcknight, 1986). This lengthy abstract recommends and describes eighteen major tactics. The eighteen are further segmented into thirty-five discrete vocal tactics. SEE APPENDIX (Figure) I. All of the tactics are classified into cognitive, affective, or participative categories. 10

Many other oral tactics formats are available with all of them offering promise to teachers that they can become excellent discourse prompters if they practice hard enough at the tactics and remember them completely enough.

Projection Tactics:

Qualities of teacher personality are conveyed to students. Affective qualities like friendliness, Empathy and enthusiasm may promote more animated student discourse. These qualities may have physical expression counterparts in gestures, facial expressions, and body language. Recommendations can easily become approved teacher tactics.

A rating chart for observing teacher enthusiasm (Collins, 1976) offers a sort of concrete guidance toward mastering the techniques of enthusiasm. SEE APPENDIX(Figure) II. Assessments are based on teacher:

1) vocal delivery - "...rapid, uplifting, varied vocal delivery..."
2) eyes - "...dancing, wide-open eyes..."
3) gestures - "...frequent, demonstrative gestures..."
4) body movement - "...varied, dramatic body movements..."
5) facial expression - "...varied, emotive facial features..."
6) word selection - "...selection of varied words, especially adjectives..."
7) acceptance of ideas and feelings - "...ready and animated acceptance of ideas and feelings..."
8) overall energy level - "...exuberant..." 11

The brief descriptions in quotes are anecdotal observations of a teacher who is advanced in the various tactics of projected enthusiasm. Others direct attention to many of the same traits and tactics (Welty, 1988).

> "Keep in mind though that each movement, each stance that you take, where you put your hands, how your face reacts, in short, everything your body does, communicates something to your audience. You must be aware at all times (like an actor on the stage) what your body is saying." 12

And what about acting techniques and student response? A series of qualitative "artistic teaching" experiments were conducted by Rubin(1977) where "...interested teachers were linked with specialists in the dramatic arts..." The graduate students in theater "... concocted a dramatic, provocative, seductive,

sexy way..." for various teachers to get specific intellectual concepts across to student groups, followed by teacher conducted discussions. One of Rubin's emphatic conclusions was:

> "...some of the finest teachers, managing truly superb classrooms were not particularly good actors and actresses. Other than achieving a slight reduction in histrionic inhibitions, teaching teachers to play roles seemed to have limited value." 13

Our instincts and deductions may still suggest that thespian talents promote better student discourse. We may want to continue belief in the power of magnetic teachers who attract with their power of movement, gesture, and expression. But discourse quality in classrooms is probably associated with variables far more extensive than the projected personality traits of teachers.

Concept and Syllabi Tactics:

When in doubt, find some expert's taxonomy and master it! Recourse to an expert's concept scheme may be the great snake-oil medicine ruse afflicting educators during the last twenty-five years.

> "You should know exactly what questions, word for word, you are going to use... and perhaps even who you are going to ask... Build your question outline at least as many layers deep as your content outline... I would suggest a syllabus for a discussion course that errs on the side of complexity and length." (Welty, 1988) 14

The danger of viewing effective discourse as prefabricated episodes controlled by teachers who act like concept accountants and bureaucrats is ever present. As a young secondary teacher of English, I didn't organize my lessons and units in the systematic schemes and language preferred by my bosses. Other peers accepted warm compliments for their various assemblies of preplanned concept management while I struggled with opprobrium. In retrospect, I realize that my knowledge of and labors devoted to planning needed improvement. But I also knew then that effective discourse, which I was trying very hard to achieve, cannot be planned into existence.

Later, in my years of college teaching, I belatedly relented to those past voices of expertise and began to demand more serious student understanding and analysis of various concept

designs (including thee taxonomy). But I still urge students in teacher education programs to weigh the possibility that various faces of effective teaching, including discourse, may follow better and less systematic drummers. Perhaps what is very crucial to understand is that the best system might be one's own system.

Space Arrangements And Equipment Tactics:

The quality and detail of various recommendations related to space, furniture, equipment, and other sundries is abundant. Pursuit of these provisions start to resemble noble quests and intrigue scenarios.

> "I would strongly advise getting on the friendliest terms with your institution's space coordinator, making him aware of your special mission and its environmental requirements." (Welty, 1988). 15

Ideal room recommendations specify the right size, shape, lighting colors, and various textures for floors, walls, and ceilings. Equipment recommendations range from calls for swivel chairs to mobile chalkboards (with well oiled castor wheels). The inclusion and location of lecterns, projectors, cabinets, easels, flip charts, tables, and desks are soberly offered as important adjuncts that will contribute to discourse excellence. "Furniture comfort" is described as "...protective against the terror of the discussion process." (Welty, 1988). 16

Sources call for adequate space in front and around the chamber for the discussion leader to "rove" (like Phil... or Oprah... or Geraldo?). "The participants must be able to see and talk to each other. The leader must be able to physically move to any part of the room and to any student." (Welty, 1988) 17 Use of several chalkboards and even various chalk colors for discussion leaders to organize responses (by color) as they arise are described.

> "Write contributions on the board... and underline them. This may pump up a shy student's self-confidence. What is written on the board takes on a huge importance." (Welty, 1988) 18

Tactics pertinent to effective and frequent use of AV equipment to improve classroom discourse (and record it for later evaluation) are expansively treated in a vast array of papers at various conferences. But do these treatments and technologies actually increase the discourse sophistication of classrooms teachers for any meaningful time beyond the demon-

stration sessions? How much did young teachers take from micro-teaching lab sessions into the real classroom when that technique was in vogue?

PERSPECTIVES ON DISCOURSE TACTICS

Attention to and respect for discourse tactics is appropriate, but also urged is consideration of their limitations. Ponder the following and somewhat personal perspectives:

1) The chances of engineering good classroom discourse through teacher mastery of any recommended assembly of good tactics are not encouraging.

2) Teacher controlled tactics are didactic, which makes teachers oral prompters and discourse puppeteers instead of discourse energizers.

3) Concentrated focus on tactics distracts teacher attention from more fundamental content ideas and the fluid student positions on those ideas.

4) Discourse driven by tactics may produce brief spurts of oral interaction during single time periods, but continuity across several class periods where ideas, projects, and other problems are returned to or discussed for several days, is a rare occurrance,

5) Even though discourse driven by tactics may be brief and discontinuous, teachers and students may become deceived by an illusion that significant discourse has occurred.

6) With discourse driven by tactics is the image of a teacher magician (or sharpie) in command of a prolix array of sly communication tricks and props ... to get the kids going.

7) The sheer volume of recommended tactics, sometimes combined with charts and grids, is mindboggling and probably fated mostly for temporary memorization by undergraduates and graduates for teacher certification and written license renewal tests.

8) Tactics meant to empower discourse stray into recitation formats. Some, realizing this, may even conclude that teachers are incapable of producing authentic discourse. Surrender to the inevitability of recitation formats becomes a fait accompli.

> "...teachers use recitation because it is(italics belong to source) effective in helping students learn the curriculum, which is largely textbook-based. Since there are few signs that this curriculum approach is changing, teachers will continue to use this method. Rather than trying to deter teachers from using recitation, therefore, teacher educators may be better advised to help them learn to use it well." (Gall, 1984) 19

9) Emphasis on discourse driven tactics has not transformed classrooms into places where students substantially engage teachers and each other in honest and open communication (Comber, et. al., 1989) 20 (Goodlad, 1984) 21 and (Stodolsky, et. al., 1981) 22

10) Another thesis intended to refresh and reinforce efforts toward elevating classroom discourse is necessary and long overdue. That thesis will be referred to as discourse designs.

DESIGNING DISCOURSE INTO CLASSROOMS

Can we extricate ourselves from the role of tactics puppeteer? Should we be resigned to traditional discourse formats where we plan and own the beginning, middle, and end of classroom communication? If we are content with being omniscient discourse manipulators, the brief quoted insight will be ignored.

> "Phase one, which we discuss here, is devoted to the creation of a true discussion group, that is, a group where the students listen to and speak with one another, where every utterance is not mediated by the teacher." (Comber, Zeiderman, and Maistrellis, 1989) 23

Discourse tactics require various teacher controlled assemblies of oral prompts, taxonomized content, projection techniques, and physical space and equipment arrangements. Occasionally we enjoy the illusion that authentic discourse has occurred in our presence ... and perhaps it has... But frequently, the communication episodes that we mediate are outcomes of didactic or or teacher owned and finished knowledge techniques.

Design driven discourse accommodates extended thinking group action and production without a teacher having to continually monitor and prompt it. This more advanced discourse is authentic and consequential because it lives in more autonomous student work rather than in various temporary and prompted teacher tactics.

Designs intended by teachers to nurture discourse are embedded into extended activities and assignments which, like real life problems, generate sincere and spontaneous discourse episodes. Examples of specific designs would be:

1) a skit produced and performed by a student group.

2) a role-play exercise.

3) a panel presentation with subsequent discourse chaired by the panel members.

4) creation of a simulation or model of something.

5) a small group of student interpreters who personally react to ideas in assigned readings (as "reactors" contribute at professional conferences).

6) the keeping of journals by students to record field experiences or idea episodes for future recall and sharing.

7) the production of "portfolios." (Baron and Kallick, 1985) 24

8) construction of rating scales (to assess the work of self or others) by small or large student groups.

These are not new ideas, but their direct association with discourse potentials is not a frequent occurrance. Often the above design examples are classified as open education or process learning techniques. Each of the activities, and many more, listed above require student engagements that soar beyond teacher controlled and quickly finished communication episodes. Their potential for advancing excellent discourse is in their identity as consequential challenges requiring extended and autonomous student work. Ideally, teachers should be able to motivate discourse without having to rely on superficial tactic plans and manipulations.

For example, a discussion about progress toward the completion of some project design might start with the teacher saying, "Would group I give the rest of us an update on the status of your projects." And thus would commence oral descriptions by student group members (or a group spokesperson) followed by teacher and student requests for further clarifications, which is how real workplace discussions begin and continue. The discourse design concept does not require preprepared question sequences written on teacher note cards (or palms)... does not require thought-level taxonomies owned by experts

and didactic teachers... does not require preoccupation with projection and theatrical cosmetics... No worry about the right space, desks, aisles, chalkboards, chalk and other stuff... The discourse energy and truth comes from designs embedded in units as various extended and consequential assignments.

Product Constructions:

For many years, I assigned the construction of a "teaching device" to students in an Educational Psychology course. I wanted them to stretch beyond attention to teacher talk and printed materials.

Each student had to conceive and construct a device with an instructional goal pertinent for use with certain student age or talent groups. The devices had to be workable and attractive products that employed a variety of materials like string, wood, metal, yarn, nails, glue, batteries, wire, etc. Decisions about painting or coloring of device parts and the whole were left to the discretion and artistic instincts of individual device makers. Small groups could also assemble and construct more ambitious devices. Each student or group arranged a date when their finished product would be displayed and orally described. It was necessary for the following questions to be addressed by device demonstrators to the class at large:

How I(we) came up with the device idea.

How I(we) put it together so it worked.

Problems encountered along the way.

Changes in plan or construction along the way.

Extent of final satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the final product.

What had not occurred to me as I initially pondered this course component was how impressively the classroom discourse would be elevated. In fact, I almost relegated the display and presentation part of it to my office in late afternoon (so as not to waste valuable class meeting time). The explained and displayed devices generated spontaneous and impressive questions and comments among class members. Their questions probed goals and theories related tdo curriculum subjects, age-level readiness, and suggested device alterations. Pragmatic questions about where materials were found, their cost, names of materials and details about assembly, durability, and time needed to

build certain devices were also discussed. Often the oral discourse continued beyond the official end of the class hour.

What I gradually realized was that I had stumbled onto a very effective way to stimulate animated oral discourse with little or no prompting required. The presenters were eager to explain their efforts and problems, then accommodate questions and comments as well. The student listeners had a very consequential stake in the presentation because they had already gone, or soon would go, through the same process. So what the presenters were doing was a source of spontaneous interest to all.

Another and very recent example of product construction was undertaken in the third grade of an elementary school in Green Bay, Wisconsin. As a geography project, the pupils built an elaborate replica of well-known (to local people) Green Bay area buildings and other landmarks. The various sites were planned and drawn on large design pages by student teams under the guidance of the teacher and her student teacher. About one-third of the classroom was finally designated for layout space. Then the teams, with helping action from interested parents, constructed miniaturized and somewhat scaled buildings, park areas, street layouts, and other sites; finally arranging them on the classroom floor. 25

The planning and real work of that project energized discourse among all of the class members for several weeks. "Project Green Bay" was almost always what the third graders wanted to talk about. What a rich source of dynamic discourse - and largely independent of any array of teacher rehersed tactics.

Product designs ought to be possible for use across many content areas. Surely science projects requiring prior planning about the use of floors, walls, and ceilings have been done for many generations. What may have been overlooked by those very creative and courageous teachers is that excellent discourse potentials were embedded into those projects and probably produced extended, spontaneous, and meaningful student discourse episodes.

Performance Presentations:

Examples of excellent performance designs include role-play, skits, sociodramas, and related thespian activities where individual and group creativity, planning, rehersal, and final enactment are outcomes. These are rich frontiers for classroom discourse. Ponder the following contrast.

Two teachers (Y and Z) want to treat J. F. Kennedy and his years of presidential impact in a meaningful way. Teacher Y assigns readings and strives to enthusiastically provide data and concepts while moving about the room. Teacher Y has also planned for large group discussion that will (hopefully) occupy students for a full 50 minute class period. Teacher Y has reviewed notes on effective discourse tactics and is optomistic. A list of important concepts and questions has been distributed to students in advance. They should be ready and eager to leap into serious dialogue and debate. But will they be? Given every kind of teacher preparation meant to set up good discourse potentials, how often does impressive discourse occur and for how long? That might be a very good traditional discussion question...

Remember that Teacher Y has relied on sophisticated tactics. The student motivation is extrinsic. The control is teacher-centered. The purpose for topic discussion is respect for the teacher by students as much (or more) than their interest in the content.

Teacher Z also wants meaningful student attention devoted to the Kennedy years. Teacher Z knows how reliance on discrete tactics can ambush good discourse potentials and decides to stretch the group beyond one period of classroom talk. This teacher embeds a performance component into the Kennedy unit.

Teacher Z explains that on a specified day, any five or six students will be randomly called on to extemporaneously role-play White House reporters (gathered somewhere) to reminisce about the Kennedy presidency. The time is two years after the assassination (time assigned by teacher). The students understand that the role-play dialogue should have an authentic texture and that the student performers have a responsibility to sincerely portray the role-played reporter characters.

Even prior to the performance day, students and teacher will have had to discuss the Kennedy years as academic content and also as a student performance topic. It is the second aspect of discussion that will stimulate more spontaneous and consequential discourse. Student questions really needing discussion might be:

"Where is the episode supposed to be occurring?"

"Will each of us (role-playing students) take reporter names?

"Will we need any props?"

"What if one of us starts to portray something inaccurately in our mock dialogues? Should we try to steer that person back on the right track?"

"What's the occasion for the reporters gathering?"

"When we get to the front of the room, how is this going to get underway?"

These are important questions and they require that students think about and discuss them because they have such an important stake in the quality of student performance.

Discourse activity for the rest of the class would focus on both the effectiveness of the role-play episode as well as the more traditional (content) focus on the topic of the Kennedy Presidency in American history.

Panels, Reports, and Reactors:

A colleague of mine views panely presentations and individual reports as very serious events. The mutual understanding between he and his students is that any individual or group report must reflect excellent planning, rehersal, and presentation (Connor, 1988) 26

> "The student presentation is an ambitious project needing careful supervision. I normally have students submit a carefully drafted outline well in advance. Together we work out a suitable approach. Because the presentation is in French, I sometimes give the student opportunity to do a dress rehersal in my office. Generally speaking, I provide whatever assistance I feel is necessary."

There is a ton of direct and tacit discourse wisdom residing in Connor's description. Direct or implicitly recommended are:

1) The panel or report must be viewed as a very serious endeavor - "...an ambitious project..."

2) Teachers need to monitor individual and panel group preparation - "...which needs careful supervision."

3) Students should provide evidence of topic focus and preparation - "...students submit a carfully drafted outline well in advance."

4) Good panel preparations are student and teacher partnerships - "Together we work out a suitable approach."

5) Teachers should try and determine extent of panel and individual readiness - "...a dress rehersal in my office."

6) The teacher should be a valid resource as various students and groups prepare - "...I provide whatever assistance I feel is necessary."

Serious and spontaneous discourse among students and between students and teachers is amplified in the above components. Hopefully the reader will reflect on the power of panels and reports for promoting extended, authentic, and consequential discourse.

A student report variation that I've recently begun to appreciate is inspired by the practice of having conference reactors for commentary after papers or panels have been presented. A few days after readings have been assigned to the class, I call on two or three predesignated student reactors to comment first. These reactors understand that their role is to become even more conversant with the assigned reading than the class at large. Each reactor, either from their usual seats, or facing the group from a seat in front, offers some brief <u>personal</u> comments about the assigned reading. The <u>personal</u> response dimension is crucial because of the sense of heightened investment that the reactors must make in comprehending the reading and preparing oral comments. The reactors must present thoughts in an extemporaneous style. though written notes may be referred to, reactor presentations must not be read!

After reactors have made their comments, one of them chairs the larger group discussion, calling on students and myself for input. My role is not one of elevated status, but of engagement with the rest in a focused reflective process. During the open forum, one of the reactors keeps track of time and diplomatically moves the group discourse toward closure.

Teachers might also consider assigning one group to construct a panel or reactor evaluation form that could be used for qualitative feedback to presenters as well as for more quantitative assessment purposes, if such is necessary. Such an evaluation form for panel group rating has been constructed by one of my classes in the Fall of 1988. SEE APPENDIX(Figure) III.

<u>Portfolios</u>:

Portfolios engage students in active self-expression. They also may involve student metacognition and self-evaluation.

Students are asked to compile a collection of their best or most interesting work done in a class or course over an extended time period. this endeavor is designed in "portfolio" form and might include drawings, essays, graded tests, extra-credit work, objects and various other completed work (Baron and Kallick, 1985). 27 The important standard for anything included in the portfolio is that it be viewed by the student as valuable and interesting.

Included in the portfolio is a written or recorded(audio or audio-visual) description of the portfolio to act as a table of contents. Part of the description includes explanation as to <u>why</u> various contents were submitted in the portfolio. Students must become introspective and metacognitive as they determine reasons for including various contents.

Student interactions (large or small groups) on various portfolio contents can be rich generators of original peer discourse. Communications between students and teachers about portfolio decisions should stand as a naturally occurring and very meaningful discourse model.

<u>Closure</u>:

The central distinction through these pages has been between:

1) discourse as driven by discrete and teacher owned tactics and...

2) discourse as driven through designs embedded in content units.

Various tactics have an honest role to play in content dialogue and mastery. The various tactic sets described earlier should be viewed in a mostly positive way. They have been a dominant force in research, teacher planning, and classroom communication activities. But the notion that tactics are limited in potential to stimulate honest(authentic), spontaneous, consequential, and extended discourse activities has not been concealed.

Teachers who rely on tactics can easily become conditioners of student communication in classrooms. Too much focus on teacher prompted and managed discourse creates teacher ownership of the classroom communication. In such situations, teachers may do little more than ask students to reproduce the thinking and language of others. Newmann writes: "If we wish students to use social knowledge to comprehend and to act with greater understanding in social affairs, we must invite them instead to produce their own language..." 28

The gradual generation of one's personal thinking and communication is not a slick trick where a with-it teacher finally pulls the right tactic lever and, voila... the kid becomes a talker! Authentic discourse is the result of extended and consequential engagement of the participants in thinking, feeling, and acting. Its scarcity in classrooms from elementary through university graduate schools around the country may be explained by the dearth of those prerequisites.

Designing classroom discourse requires the careful insertion of various required and optional productions usually referred to as assignments. If these assignments are sufficiently interesting and challenging to students, they will, over a period of days and weeks, generate as much of the discourse as direct teacher efforts...and maybe more of it.

A final concern beckons, and only briefly, though it should represent a real source of worry for all of us. I refer to the resistant attitudes represented by many teachers across the country. In fact I believe that all of us share in it. We resist discourse renaissance in our classrooms through a habituated sense of duty that fuels idea egocentricism and propels obsession with complete content coverage (or near to it) at any cost. IN OTHER WORDS, we are trapped in the narrow conviction that we are the experts and that they (students) have to learn it all from us or risk being incompletely educated. The condition is well documented by McNeil(1988). 29

In a three-part article, she reports results of her research conducted with Social Studies secondary school teachers (in a certain sunbelt system). The teachers studied are described as tending to reduce issues to "...lists of facts, names, places, events, laws, and the like." McNeil proposed that these teachers wished to "...maintain authority over content," 30 and that the lists copied and memorized by students helped teachers to remain primary sources of course content. McNeil also revealed that many of the teachers in her study admitted that they felt uncomfortable with (and wanted to avoid) the inefficiencies perceived as related to student questions and open class discourse.

Administrators and teachers may want to reflect on the following questions pertaining to teacher attitudes and their influence on classroom discourse.

1) To what extent do teachers in a school view their content as too difficult or highly specialized for access by most students?

2) How complimentary do teachers in a school feel about student abilities and motivations?

3) To what extent do teachers in a school concentrate on students needing to learn and think about content area knowledge?

4) How many teachers in a school believe that exchanging ideas with students has significant educational merit?

5) How emphatically do teachers in a school value and represent valid knowledge as authoritative and self-contained?

6) To what extent do teachers in a school value consequential knowledge (i.e. knowledge that is perceived by students as efficacious beyond school achievement grades)?

7) How many teachers in a school believe in the possibleness of effective discourse in their classrooms?

Reflections on these questions will not yield conclusions that are standardized or quantitative. But normal powers of deduction should enable believers interested in discourse improvement to arrive at the right conclusions about teacher attitudes that will advance or erode student efforts and progress toward production of their own thinking and language.

Appendix(Figure) I

COGNITIVE ASPECTS

1. Define the Topic.
2. The instructor must be prepared.
3. Use a common experience.
4. Acting as a facilitator is the instructor's primary role.

    a. Listen ...
    b. Observe ...
    c. Allow for pauses and silence ...
    d. Post and verify ...
    e. Request examples and illustrations ...
    f. Encourage and recognize students' contributions ...
    g. Test consensus ...
    h. Provide a summary and/or conclusion ...

5. Regarding Questioning(discrete techniques):

    a. Ask students for clarification ...
    b. Ask students to support their opinions ...
    c. Use open-ended questions ...
    d. Use divergent questions ...
    e. Rephrase questions ...
    f. Pause, give the students time to reflect ...

6. Possible Stages to follow:

    a. Define the problem ...
    b. Have students suggest possible solutions ...
    c. Collect relevant data ...
    d. Evaluate various solutions, positions, and conclusions ...
    e. Decide upon a solution, position, etc. ...

Appendix(Figure) I cont.

AFFECTIVE ASPECTS

7. Know your students .
8. Be patient .
9. Be sensitive to student feelings .
10. Challenge the students, but do not threaten them:

    a. Do not question a single student for too long ...
    b. Use personal anecdotes ...

11. Avoid premature agreement.
12. Deal with conflicts ...
13. Recommended instructor behaviors are:

    a. Be silent ...
    b. Hear the students out ...
    c. Inquire ...
    d. Paraphrase ...
    e. Be accepting ...

REGARDING PARTICIPATION

14. Create the expectation of participation.
15. Clarify how participation will influence grades.
16. Avoid always looking directly at the student speaking.
17. Control excessive talkers:

    a. Do not call on the "talkers" first ...
    b. Solicit responses from the "nontalkers" ...
    c. Have the class observed by someone assigned as an observer ...
    d. Talk to the student outside of class ...

18. Instructor's role as group leader:

    a. Call the class to order ...
    b. Help the group clarify its goals ...
    c. Keep the group on track ...
    d. Clarify and mediate differences ...
    e. Summarize and draw conclusions ...

Cashin, William E. and Mcknight, Philip C., "Improving Discussions," Idea Paper No. 15, Kansas State University (Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development), Jan., 1986, 1-4.

Appendix(Figure) II

What Is Your Enthusiasm Rating?*

You can determine just how enthusiastic you are by using the eight enthusiasm behaviors. The most effective method would be to videotape one or two lessons and rate yourself. If a videotape recorder is not available, persuade a colleague (with a reciprocal agreement) to observe you.

* Enthusiasm Rating chart was developed by Mary L. Collins, 1976.

A word of caution: Don't rely too heavily on the results of only one observation. Repeated observations will enable you and your observer to evaluate the level of enthusiasm. Try changing your low-enthusiasm performance to high by practicing the behaviors below.

In general, a score of 8 - 20 dull or unenthusiastic level; 21 - 42 moderate level of enthusiasm; 43 - 56 very high level of enthusiasm.

	DEGREE OF PERFORMANCE						
	LOW		MEDIUM			HIGH	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1. Vocal Delivery	Monotone, minimum inflections, little variation in speech, poor articulation.		Pleasant variations of pitch, volume, and speed; good articulation.			Great and sudden changes from rapid, excited speech to a whisper; varied tone and pitch.	
2. Eyes	Looked dull or bored; seldom opened eyes wide or raised eyebrows; avoids eye contact; often maintains a blank stare.		Appeared interested; occasionally lighting up, shining, opening wide.			Characterized as dancing, snapping, shining, lighting up frequently, opening wide, eyebrows raised; maintains eye contact while avoiding staring.	
3. Gestures	Seldom moved arms out toward person or object; never used sweeping movements; kept arms at side or folded, rigid.		Often pointed, occasional sweeping motion using body, head, arms, hands, and face; maintained steady pace of gesturing.			Quick and demonstrative movements of body, head, arms, hands, and face.	
4. Body Movement	Seldom moved from one spot, or from sitting to standing position; sometimes "paces" nervously.		Moved freely, slowly, and steadily.			Large body movements, swung around, walked rapidly, changed pace; unpredictable and energetic; natural body movements.	
5. Facial Expression	Appeared deadpan, expressionless or frowned; little smiling; lips closed.		Agreeable; smiled frequently; looked pleased, happy, or sad if situation called for.			Appeared vibrant, demonstrative; showed many expressions; broad smile; quick, sudden changes in expression.	
6. Word Selection	Mostly nouns, few descriptors or adjectives; simple or trite expressions.		Some descriptors or adjectives or repetition of the same ones.			Highly descriptive, many adjectives, great variety.	
7. Acceptance of Ideas and Feelings	Little indication of acceptance or encouragement; may ignore students' feelings or ideas.		Accepted ideas and feelings; praised or clarified; some variations in response, but frequently repeated same ones.			Quick to accept, praise, encourage, or clarify; many variations in response; vigorous nodding of head when agreeing.	
8. Overall Energy Level	Lethargic; appears inactive, dull, or sluggish.		Appeared energetic and demonstrative sometimes, but mostly maintained an even level.			Exuberant; high degree of energy and vitality; highly demonstrative.	

Collins, Mary L., "The Effects of Training for Enthusiasm on Student Achievement and Attitudes." Doctoral dissertation, Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University, 1976 (described in Practical Applications of Research, Newsletter of Phi Delta Kappa's Center on Evaluation, Development, and Research, Vol. 3, No. 4, June, 1981, p. 4).

PANEL PRESENTATION - GROUP EVALUATION FORM:

Rating Scale:

1 = weak 2 = fair 3 = good 4 = very good

Preliminary Assessments:					Item Scores
1. Topic Title	1	2	3	4	_____
2. Topic Value(important knowledge)	1	2	3	4	_____
3. Topic Introduction(initial audience engagement)	1	2	3	4	_____
Main Presentation:					**Item Scores**
4. Use of Language(literacy)	1	2	3	4	_____
5. Oral Presentation(volume, pronunciation, clarity)	1	2	3	4	_____
6. Idea Focus(main concepts are identified)	1	2	3	4	_____
7. Panel Scholarship(references are cited)	1	2	3	4	_____
8. Evidence of Preparation and Effort	1	2	3	4	_____
9. Use of Visuals, Materials, Handouts	1	2	3	4	_____
10. Content Organization(idea arrangement and emphasis)	1	2	3	4	_____
11. Content Coverage(topic is well explored)	1	2	3	4	_____
12. Conclusion/Summation(final ideas and emphasis)	1	2	3	4	_____
13. Length of Presentation(ideal is about 25-30 minutes)	1	2	3	4	_____
14. Evidence of Audience Interest/Attention	1	2	3	4	_____
15. Panel Response to Audience Questions	1	2	3	4	_____
16. Panel Member Cohesion(presenters appear mutually organized and aware)	1	2	3	4	_____
17. Overall Evaluation(a total impression)	1	2	3	4	_____

A GPA score or percent score can be calculated by each evaluator.

GPA score = Sum of 17 item scores divided by 17 GPA SCORE - _____

Percent score = Sum of 17 item scores divided by 68 PCNT SCORE - _____

Assessment form developed by Jerald Hauser with the Edh21 class of Fall semester, 1988

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